

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-12. (Cancelled)

13. (New) A rechargeable battery having a housing comprising at least two cells that can be filled with an electrolyte, the rechargeable battery comprising:

a degassing system having openings provided therein, the cover and the degassing system arranged such that the openings are located above the cells of the rechargeable battery; and

a sealing plug provided in each of the openings, the sealing plug having an upper part and a lower part, the lower part comprising a splash basket that has an inner cavity that decreases in size from an upper end of the splash basket to a terminal end of the splash basket;

wherein the splash basket comprises a plurality of plates that extend from the upper end of the splash basket to the terminal end of the splash basket, the plates separated from each other by slots that extend to the terminal end of the splash basket such that the plates are not coupled together at the terminal end of the splash basket to allow free movement of the plates at the terminal end of the splash basket.

14. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein the upper part covers the openings on the outside of the cover and the lower part extends in the direction of the cells.

15. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein each of the slots has a width that broadens with increasing distance from the terminal end of the splash basket.

16. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein the sealing plug has an opening provided therein separate from the slots and adjacent to the openings of the degassing system and the degassing system is connected to the splash basket via the opening in the sealing plug such that the slots form return paths for electrolyte from the degassing system.

17. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein the sealing plug is integrally formed as part of the degassing system.

18. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein the splash basket has a roughened surface.

19. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein an acid level indicator is attached to the upper part of the sealing plug and the acid level indicator has a roughened surface.

20. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein a state of charge indicator is attached to the upper part of the sealing plug and the state of charge indicator has a roughened surface.

21. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13 wherein the terminal end of the splash basket contacts electrolyte provided in the cells.

22. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 13, further comprising a cover, wherein the sealing plug has a seal which is fitted to the upper part of the sealing plug for sealing the cover.

23. (New) A rechargeable battery having a housing comprising at least two cells that can be filled with an electrolyte, the rechargeable battery comprising:

a cover having openings provided therein;

a degassing system having openings provided therein, the cover and the degassing system arranged such that the openings provided in the cover and the degassing system are located above the cells of the rechargeable battery; and

a sealing plug provided in each of the openings of the degassing system, the sealing plug having an upper part covering the openings on the outside of the cover and a lower part having a splash basket that has a terminal end extending in the direction of the cells;

wherein the splash basket comprises a plurality of plates separated by slots distributed around the circumference of the splash basket, the slots continuing to the terminal end of the splash basket such that the plates at the terminal end of the splash basket are not connected to adjacent plates;

whereby the separation of the plates at the terminal end of the splash basket allows the splash basket to flex upon insertion into the openings of the degassing system.

24. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein each of the slots has a width that broadens with increasing distance from the terminal end of the splash basket.

25. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein the sealing plug has an opening provided therein separate from the slots and adjacent to the openings of the degassing system and the degassing system is connected to the splash basket via the opening in the sealing plug such that the slots form return paths for electrolyte from the degassing system.

26. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein the sealing plug is integrally formed as part of the degassing system.

27. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein the splash basket has a roughened surface.

28. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein an acid level indicator is attached to the upper part of the sealing plug.

29. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein a state of charge indicator is attached to the upper part of the sealing plug.

30. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein the terminal end of the splash basket contacts electrolyte provided in the cells.

31. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 23 wherein the sealing plug is formed from an electrically conductive plastic.

32. (New) A sealing plug for sealing openings which are incorporated above cells in a rechargeable battery, the sealing plug comprising:

an upper part; and

a lower part which ends in a splash basket, the splash basket having an upper end and a lower terminal end, the splash basket defining an opening that increases in size with increasing distance from the terminal end of the splash basket;

wherein the splash basket comprises a plurality of plates separated by slots that extend from the upper end of the splash basket to the terminal end of the splash basket, the slots narrowing in width from an upper end of the splash basket to the terminal end of the splash basket;

wherein the plates are not connected to adjacent plates at the terminal end of the splash basket to allow free movement of the plates relative to each other upon insertion into an opening of the rechargeable battery.

33. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 32 further comprising a state of charge indicator and electrolyte level indicator provided in the upper part and passing through the splash basket, the state of charge indicator and electrolyte level indicator projecting at the terminal end of the splash basket.

34. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 33 wherein at least one of the state of charge indicator and the electrolyte level indicator has a roughened surface.

35. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 32 wherein the terminal end of the splash basket is configured to contact electrolyte provided in the rechargeable battery.

36. (New) The rechargeable battery of Claim 32 wherein the sealing plug is formed from an electrically conductive plastic.